

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
SCS-06 CA-01 HA-05 NEAE-00 /078 W
-----129349 171315Z /45

P R 171110Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8066
INFO USICA WASHDC
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 4033

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, AF, UR, US
SUBJECT: AFGHAN FOREIGN MINISTER OFFICER DISCUSSES INFORMATION
POLIAU

REF: KABUL 3814-C

1. THE FOLLOWING POINTS WERE COVERED IN A HALF-1974 DIS-
CUSSION MAY 16 BETWEEN ABDUL AHAD NASSER-ZIAYEE, DIRECTOR FOR
INFORMATION IN THE AFGHAN FOREIGN MINISTRY, AND USICA'S
INFORMATION OFFICER.

A. AFGHAN PRESS LAW CONTINUES IN EFFECT AS BEFORE THE
REVOLUTION. WHEN SHOWN TWO RECENT EXAMPLES OF HARSH
CRITICISM OF US IN THE "SOVIET EMBASSY NEWS BULLETIN,"
NASSER-ZIAYEE COMMENTED THAT HE HAD NOT SEEN THOSE
PARTICULAR ARTICLES, BUT WOULD TAKE ACTION ON THEM. HE
ALSO MENTIONED THAT HE REVIEWS PUBLICATIONS FROM ALL
EMBASSIES IN KABUL, BUT DOES NOT HAVE GREAT PROBLEMS,
EXCEPT FROM THE CHINESE WHO CONTINUALLY CRITICIZE THE SOVIETS.

B. NASSER-ZIAYEE EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE CONFUSION
SURROUNDING THE BARRY SHLACHTER CASE, IN WHICH THE
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ASSOCIATED PRESS CORRESPONDENT WAS HELD BY AFGHAN
AUTHORITIES FOR ALMOST 48 HOURS (SEE REFTTEL). HE SAID
THAT THE SECURITY FORCES ARE NOT SENSITIVE TO DIPLOMATIC
RELATIONS, AND THAT ALL WERE VERY SUSPICIOUS OF ANYONE
ASKING QUESTIONS DURING THE DIFFICULT PERIOD FOLLOWING THE
REVOLUTION.

C. COMMENTING ON POST-REVOLUTION PRESS COVERAGE, MR. NASSER-ZIAYEE FELT THAT PRESS IN IRAN WERE PARTICULARLY IRRESPONSIBLE AND SURPRISINGLY UNINFORMED ABOUT EVENTS AND PEOPLE IN AFGHANISTAN. HE MENTIONED THAT IRANIAN PRESS VARIOUSLY DESCRIBED DAOUD AS A BROTHER, OR A COUSIN, OR SON OF THE KING, AND HEAVILY EXAGGERATED EVENTS IN KABUL AT THE TIME OF THE FIGHTING.

D. ON THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT'S TREATMENT OF THE FOREIGN PRESS, NASSER-ZIAYEE SAID EVERYTHING CAME TOO QUICKLY FOR THE PRESS TO BE TREATED ADEQUATELY, AND THE PRESS OF EVENTS AFTER THE REVOLUTION PREVENTED THE HOLDING OF AN EARLIER PRESS CONFERENCE. THE PRESS MADE EXCESSIVE DEMANDS ON THE FOREIGN MINISTRY IN TERMS OF REQUESTING INTERVIEWS AND REQUESTING SPECIAL PERMISSION FOR ENTRY INTO SENSITIVE AREAS. A DECISION WAS MADE TO DENY ALL REQUESTS, RATHER THAN ACCEPT SOME FROM FEW CORRESPONDENTS. FOR EXAMPLE, HE EXPLAINED, AN EAST GERMAN TELEVISION TEAM HAD REQUESTED THAT ALL ROOMS IN THE PALACE BE OPENED FOR FILMING, "AN IMPOSSIBLE REQUEST."

E. ON POSSIBILITY OF INTERVIEWS OR PRESS CONFERENCES IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, NASSER-ZIAYEE FELT IT HIGHLY UNLIKELY, CLAIMING THAT IF ONE REQUEST WERE GRANTED, THEN ALL WOULD HAVE TO BE GRANTED AND THAT WOULD MAKE EXCESSIVE DEMANDS ON TIME OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, THE FOREIGN MINISTER, OR THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (HE CONFIDENTIAL

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DID NOT MENTION THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE, ANOTHER OF THE TOP LEADERS). HE SAID DEMANDS FROM THE INDILA PRESS HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY GREAT.

2. COMMENT: NASSER-ZIAYEE'S COMMENTS REVEAL THE CONTINUING SENSITIVITY OF THE NEW REGIME TO ITS IMAGE ABROAD, IN SPITE OF ITS CONCERTED EFFORT TO TAKE STEPS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THE MEDIA, SUCH AS ALLOWING GREATER ACCESSIBILITY OF THE PRESS TO AFGHAN OFFICIALS. END OF COMMENT.

3. BIOGRAPHIC NOTE: NASSER-ZIAYEE, WHO HAD APPEARED TENSE RIGHT AFTER THE REVOLUTION, WAS RELAXED AND VERY FRIENDLY THROUGHOUT THE CONVERSATION. HE IS AMONG THE MOST COMPETENT DAOUDIST OFFICIALS KEPT ON AFTER THE REVOLUTION -- HOWEVER, AS A MOHAMMADZAI, HIS DAYS COULD BE NUMBERED.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, THE PRESS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978KABUL04033
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780207-0986
Format: TEL
From: KABUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780550/aaaabqjm.tel
Line Count: 112
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 88263e9c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 KABUL 3814
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2668880
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AFGHAN FOREIGN MINISTER OFFICER DISCUSSES INFORMATION POLIAU
TAGS: PEPR, SOPN, AF, UR, US, (NASSER-ZIAYEE, ABDUL AHAD)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/88263e9c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014